**Pandora’s Box**

Prometheus made Zeus very angry by stealing fire from Mount Olympus and giving it to the race of mortal men living on earth, who were cold and hungry. Zeus had warned Prometheus not to give fire to men, and was outraged that anyone had the nerve to ignore his command.

In revenge, Zeus ordered Hephaestus, the god of smiths, to craft a gorgeous woman out of earth and water. The beautiful goddess of Love, Aphrodite, was asked to pose as a model, just to make sure the woman was perfect. Once this was done, the Four Winds breathed life into her and there she lay sleeping, brand new! Zeus summoned the other Olympians and asked them each to give this new creation a gift.

Aphrodite adorned her with beauty, grace and desire; Hermes, the Messenger god, gave her cunning and boldness; Demeter showed her how to tend a garden; Athena taught her manual dexterity and to spin; Apollo taught her to sing sweetly and play the lyre; Poseidon's gift was a pearl necklace and the god of the sea promised her that she would never drown. But Zeus also made her foolish, mischievous and idle. This was the first woman, divine in appearance but quite human in reality.

The gods called her Pandora, which means "All-gifted", or "The gift of all", because each god had given her a power by which she would work the ruin of man, and because of the many presents bestowed upon her at Olympus. Before sending her to earth, the gods held a big party and Hermes, the Messenger god, presented Pandora with a splendidly crafted box adorned with wonderful images. But Hermes warned Pandora that she must **never open the box!**

She must NEVER open the box...And then Zeus' wife, Hera, gave her the quality of **curiosity**! Tell me, is that fair?

Prometheus had warned his brother Epimetheus never to accept any gift from Zeus, knowing that the king of the Olympians bore a heavy grudge against him. However, when Hermes delivered her before Epimetheus as his bride, the foolish Titan was overwhelmed by her exquisite beauty - Indeed Pandora was the most beautiful woman ever created!

"Glorious Zeus feels bad for the sorrow and disgrace that has plagued your family." said trickster Hermes to the Titan. "To make up for it, and to demonstrate that there are no hard feelings toward you for your brother's folly, Zeus presents you with this gift -- This beautiful woman named Pandora, the fairest in all the world, is to become your wife." Epimetheus, instantly forgetting his wiser brother's warnings, eagerly accepted the lovely gift from Zeus and made her his wife. Pandora settled into their large home and took on the wifely duties, baking and spinning and tending the garden. She thought herself the happiest bride in the world as she played tunes on the lyre and joyfully danced for her new husband.

But Pandora daily was tortured by curiosity. How would you like to receive a beautiful wedding present, shiny and inviting, only to be told you could never open it? At first she kept the golden box on the table and daily polished it so that visitors might admire its beauty. So inviting...Hera's gift, curiosity, was like a cruel curse. Pandora wondered what the box contained.

But deep inside her, Pandora knew that her promise must not be broken. Her better sense finally overcame her ardent curiosity and she removed the box from the table and concealed it in a dusty closet. This made matters worse - she found herself walking by the closet and pausing at the doorway, as if the mysterious golden box was calling to her. Sometimes she would enter the closet and hold the box for a guilty moment, then rush out and lock the door. This was killing her!

Desperate, Pandora took the box and locked it inside a heavy wooden chest. She placed chains around the chest, dug a hole, and buried it in her garden. With great effort she rolled a huge boulder on top of the "grave", determined to forget all about this object of her obsession.

She couldn't sleep that night. No matter how she tried, her thoughts kept returning to the buried golden box. She put on her robe and went out to the garden. As if in a trance, Pandora found herself drawn to the boulder. She reached out and touched the stone and like magic it moved, revealing the hole. This must be a sign from Hermes!

"You must never open the box!" As she dug the earth to get to the box, the Messenger god's words rang in her mind. "Never open the box!"

Pandora wanted to obey the command of the gods, and she really wasn't wicked, but at last she could no longer contain her curiosity. Taking the little golden key from around her neck, she fitted it into the keyhole and gently opened the box. Just a tiny bit, so that she could have a little peek, you see, and then she was going to close it up again. Just a little, tiny peek...It was her wedding gift, after all...

Bad move. No sooner had Pandora opened the box, that she realized her mistake. A nasty smell filled the air and she heard buzzing and rustling inside. In horror she slammed the lid shut, but it was too late! The evil had been unleashed!

The gods had each put something harmful inside the box. All the sicknesses and sadness known to humanity were released once Pandora opened the jar. Old Age, Sickness, Insanity, Disease, Vice, Passion, Greed, Crime, Death, Theft, Lies, Jealousy, Famine, the list went on and on...every evil, that until then had been trapped inside the gift from the gods, was now loosed upon the earth.

Poor Pandora was horrified at what she had caused, and at this surprise explosion of evil. But just as she thought all was lost, one little fairy, a solitary good thing, hidden at the bottom of the jar, flew out.

It was **Hope**! Deep down inside the hateful jar was the only thing that has sustained humanity in times of sorrow, pain and misery - Hope. The endless Hope that things will soon get better. And it's this Hope that keeps us going to this very day, our sole comfort in times of misfortune.